

REPUBLICANS BLOCK AN INCREASE WHILE WORKERS SUFFER

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the Republican leadership of this body is preparing to adjourn the House for a 5-week vacation at the end of this week without meeting the needs of America's working families. Republicans continue to block an increase in the minimum wage that would benefit 6.6 million people in this country, three-quarters of whom are adults over the age of 20 trying to support their families.

This Republican Congress has refused to raise the minimum wage since 1997, causing it now to reach its lowest real value level in 50 years. The current pay of \$5.15 per hour is simply not a fair or living wage in this economy. In fact, it now takes a minimum wage earner a full day's pay just to buy a tank of gas. What does that leave for housing and for food?

Democrats believe that it is simply unacceptable in this great and wealthy Nation for an American who works full time to live in poverty while the Republicans in this body give handouts to the wealthiest 1 percent.

Mr. Speaker, House Republicans have had numerous opportunities to vote for an increase in the minimum wage; yet they continue to stall this critical measure while millions of Americans suffer the consequences.

We should not leave this week without giving 6 million Americans a pay raise.

DEMOCRATS HAVE BEEN RIGHT ABOUT IRAQ ALL ALONG, WILLING TO ASK THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Prime Minister of Iraq will address a joint session of Congress, and I hope that he levels with us about the current situation in his nation.

Over the past week, the violence in Iraq has been replaced on the front pages and the television screens by the violence in Lebanon and Israel. However, that does not mean that things are getting any better. In fact, last month more than 3,100 Iraqis were killed in sectarian violence. That is more than 100 killed every day.

While the situation in Iraq continues to spiral out of control, the Bush administration is just simply incapable of coming up with a strategy that provides a new direction. And for 3 years now, the House Republicans have refused to demand any answers from this administration about its failures in Iraq. They have allowed the incompetence to continue without holding anyone responsible.

Congress can no longer sit on the sidelines. It is time to recognize that our brave young men and women must come home. They must be brought home as quickly as possible. We must end this occupation of Iraq. We need to provide a new direction for this administration and for our country. The American people are insisting on that.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, when this House passed the Medicare prescription drug benefit, many of us said it was a boon for the drug companies.

The results are in. Drug companies are making billions in extra profits, \$130 billion in additional profits, all subsidized by the taxpayer. This morning's New York Times reads: "Eventually" the prescription drug bill "could fuel a political reaction if the drug prices continue to rise, but analysts expect that the industry's influence in Washington will delay any changes for years."

Therein lies the problem. This Congress is too busy doing the bidding of the drug companies and the drug companies' business to do the people's business.

On numerous occasions the House and Senate have voted strongly in favor of importation of prescription drugs. Importation is a safe and effective way to help consumers and taxpayers save money. Just 2 weeks ago, the Senate voted to block Customs from seizing shipments of prescription drugs; yet the seizures continue. The administration has turned the Customs Service over to the drug companies, confiscating prescription drugs at a time when they should be securing our borders, screening cargo, and stemming the flow of dangerous narcotics. The intent of the House and the Senate is clear.

It is time for a new direction. It is time for a new policy that makes sense to the American people.

STRAIGHT TALK ON THE ECONOMY

(Mr. KELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give the American people some straight talk about our economy.

In 1992 Bill Clinton ran for President with the slogan: "It's the economy, stupid." Yesterday his wife, Hillary, reminded us of that slogan in her speech to the Democratic Leadership Council.

Well, our economy is very strong and growing. We have created 5.4 million new jobs in the last 3 years. Our unemployment rate is better than the average unemployment rate of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We have had 18 straight quarters of economic growth.

Homeownership is now at 69 percent, the largest in history. And our revenues are coming in so high that we will be able to meet our goal of cutting the deficit in half by 2008, a full year ahead of schedule.

This time let's take the Clintons at their word. If it is "the economy, stupid," then let's be smart and reelect those Congressmen who gave us this strong economy in the first place by lowering the taxes.

SOME HOUSE REPUBLICANS FINALLY WILLING TO ADMIT MISTAKES ON IRAQ. WHAT TOOK THEM SO LONG?

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, after more than 3 years of fighting the war in Iraq, it now appears that some House Republicans are finally beginning to question the administration's competence in running the war and are finally beginning to question the rosy scenarios that continue to come from Vice President CHENEY and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld.

An article in last week's Washington Post, entitled "GOP Lawmakers Edge Away from Optimism on Iraq," says that Republicans are having to reconsider their strategy on the war. With an average of over 100 Iraqis dying every day last month, one of my Republican colleagues admitted that they have to change their message so they don't look like they can't face reality.

And so now, after berating Democrats for the past 3 years and questioning the administration's failed policies in Iraq, some House Republicans are willing to admit that things are not going well in Iraq.

Now the question is, Is this a convenient message that they plan to use for the next couple of months between now and mid-term elections, or will my Republican colleagues actually take their oversight responsibilities responsibly? Only time will tell.

STEM CELL RESEARCH: HOUSE GOP REFUSES TO OVERRIDE VETO

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, last week House Republicans refused to override the President's veto of life-saving stem cell research. Their action will hurt our Nation's effort to find cures to diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and cancer.

The stem cell research bill could have directly benefited an estimated 100 million of our fellow Americans, those personally fighting these diseases and their family members who share their suffering and pain. The legislation would have expanded Federal funding for extremely promising embryonic stem cell research while at the

same time imposing strict ethical standards.

House Republicans refused to listen to our Nation's leading scientists, biomedical researchers, and health organizations who said this legislation can save lives. More importantly, they refused to listen to the pleas of their own constituents. Instead, they once again supported a President who has no interest in giving our researchers the tools they need to find cures to diseases like cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. They were pandering to a very narrow part of their base. Shame on them.

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. AL GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I speak for the least among us. And in speaking for them, I remind us that it is time for us to raise the minimum wage. That is "raise" as in r-a-i-s-e, not raze as in r-a-z-e, because there are people in this country who would raze, who would decimate, not elevate, who would decimate the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, these people are not among those 37 million who are living in poverty. They are not among the millions who make \$5.15 an hour. They are not among those who suffer and languish in poverty with no way out.

Mr. Speaker, those who make \$5.15 an hour work through Christmas. They work through Easter. They work through Thanksgiving. And they make, at the end of the year, \$10,712.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to raise the minimum wage. I speak for the least, the last, and the lost.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 3525) to amend subpart 2 of part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to improve outcomes for children in families affected by methamphetamine abuse and addiction, to reauthorize the promoting safe and stable families program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 3525

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds as follows:

(1) For Federal fiscal year 2004, child protective services (CPS) staff nationwide reported investigating or assessing an estimated 3,000,000 allegations of child maltreatment, and determined that 872,000 children had been abused or neglected by their parents or other caregivers.

(2) Combined, the Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) programs provide States about \$700,000,000 per year for services intended to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. These programs are considered the largest source of targeted Federal funding in the child protection system for prevention—that is, for services to ensure that children are not abused or neglected and, whenever possible, help children remain safely with their families.

(3) States have broad flexibility in directing CWS dollars to protect children from abuse and neglect. Under the PSSF program, States must invest significant portions of program funds in family preservation services, family support services, time-limited reunification services, and post-adoption support services.

(4) However, a 2003 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that little research is available on the effectiveness of activities supported by CWS funds—evaluations of services supported by PSSF funds have generally shown little or no effect.

(5) Further, the Department of Health and Human Services recently completed initial Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs) in each State. No State was in full compliance with all measures of the CFSRs. The CFSRs also revealed that States need to work to prevent repeat abuse and neglect of children, improve services provided to families to reduce the risk of future harm (including by better monitoring the participation of families in services), and strengthen upfront services provided to families to prevent unnecessary family break-up and protect children who remain at home.

(6) Federal policy should ensure that States are appropriately targeting CWS and PSSF funds to assist at-risk families and protect abused and neglected children to address issues found in the CFSRs. Encouraging States to invest their CWS and PSSF funds in services that promote and protect the welfare of children, support strong, healthy families, and reduce the reliance on out-of-home care, will help ensure all children are raised in safe, loving families.

(7) CFSRs also found a strong correlation between frequent caseworker visits with children and positive outcomes for these children, such as timely achievement of permanency and other indicators of child well-being.

(8) However, a December 2005 report by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General found that only 20 States were able to produce reports to show whether caseworkers actually visited children in foster care on at least a monthly basis, despite the fact that nearly all States had written standards suggesting monthly visits were State policy. In fact, 7 of these 20 States indicated that fewer than half of the children in foster care were visited on a monthly basis.

(9) The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 provided \$40,000,000 in fiscal year 2006 for the PSSF program which this Act ensures will be available and which the Congressional Budget Office estimates will increase manda-

tory budget authority by \$40,000,000 each year from 2006 through 2015, for a total of \$400,000,000.

(10) A 2003 GAO report found that the average tenure for a child welfare caseworker is less than 2 years and this level of turnover negatively affects safety and permanency for children.

(11) Targeting additional PSSF funds to ensure children in foster care are visited on at least a monthly basis will promote better outcomes for vulnerable children, including by preventing further abuse and neglect.

SEC. 3. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES PROGRAM.

(a) ELIMINATION OF FINDINGS.—Section 430 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 629) is amended by striking all through "(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose" and inserting the following:

"SEC. 430. PURPOSE.

"The purpose".

(b) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE COST REIMBURSEMENT.—Section 434 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629d) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by inserting ", subject to subsection (d)," after "shall"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(d) LIMITATION ON REIMBURSEMENT FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary shall not make a payment to a State under this section with respect to expenditures for administrative costs during a fiscal year, to the extent that the total amount of the expenditures exceeds 10 percent of the total expenditures of the State during the fiscal year under the State plan approved under section 432.".

(c) FUNDING OF MANDATORY GRANTS AT \$345 MILLION PER FISCAL YEAR.—Section 436(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629f(a)) is amended by striking "for fiscal year 2006." and all that follows and inserting "for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011.".

(d) FUNDING OF DISCRETIONARY GRANTS.—Section 437(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629g(a)) is amended by striking "2002 through 2006" and inserting "2007 through 2011".

(e) INCREASE IN SET-ASIDES FOR INDIAN TRIBES.—

(1) MANDATORY GRANTS.—Section 436(b)(3) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(3)) is amended by striking "1" and inserting "3".

(2) DISCRETIONARY GRANTS.—Section 437(b)(3) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)(3)) is amended by striking "2" and inserting "3".

(f) COLLECTION OF DATA ON TRIBAL PROMOTING SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES PLANS.—Section 432(b)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraph (A); and

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking "Notwithstanding subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, the" and inserting "The".

(g) AUTHORITY OF INTERTRIBAL CONSORTIA TO APPLY FOR GRANTS.—Section 432(b)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(2)), as amended by subsection (f) of this section, is amended—

(1) by inserting before subparagraph (B) the following:

"(A) INTERTRIBAL CONSORTIA.—This subpart shall not be interpreted to preclude the development and submission of a single tribal plan under this subpart by the participating tribes of an intertribal consortium."; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) by inserting "or tribal consortium" after "Indian tribe"; and

(B) by inserting "and tribal consortia" after "Indian tribes".

(h) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 431(a)(6) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)(6)) is amended by striking "1986" and inserting "1996".